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perhaps may be regarded as less equivocal, than those which we have enumerated. We refer to the idioms and vocabulary of words, which are peculiar to each of these dialects. For very obvious reasons, we could enter into no discussion of these: the curious reader of this article, who may wish for information upon such points, is referred to the various dictionaries which have been published of the Italian dialects, and some of which we have had occasion to mention in the progress of this article.

ART. III.—*Wheaton's History of the Northmen*.

History of the Northmen, or Danes and Normans. London. 8vo. 1831.

We are misers in knowledge as in wealth. Open inexhaustible mines to us on every hand, yet we return to grope in the exhausted stream of past opulence, and sift its sands for ore; place us in an age when history pours in upon us like an inundation, and the events of a century are crowded into a lustre; yet we tenaciously hold on to the scanty records of foregone times, and often neglect the all-important present to discuss the possibility of the almost forgotten past.

It is worthy of remark, that this passion for the antiquated and the obsolete appears to be felt with increasing force in this country. It may be asked, what sympathies can the native of a land, where every thing is in its youth and freshness, have with the antiquities of the ancient hemisphere? What inducement can he have to turn from the animated scene around him, and the brilliant perspective that breaks upon his imagination, to wander among the mouldering monuments of the olden world, and to call up its shadowy lines of kings and warriors from the dim twilight of tradition?—

‘Why seeks he, with unwearied toil,
Through death’s dark walls to urge his way,
Reclaim his long asserted spoil,
And lead oblivion into day?’

We answer, that he is captivated by the powerful charm of contrast. Accustomed to a land where every thing is bursting into life, and history itself but in its dawning, antiquity has, in fact, for him the effect of novelty; and the fading, but mellow, glories of the past, which linger in the horizon of the Old

World, relieve the eye, after being dazzled with the rising rays which sparkle up the firmament of the New.

It is a mistake, too, that the political faith of a republican requires him, on all occasions, to declaim with bigot heat against the stately and traditional ceremonials ; the storied pomps and pageants of other forms of government ; or even prevents him from, at times, viewing them with interest, as matters worthy of curious investigation. Independently of the themes they present for historical and philosophical inquiry, he may regard them with a picturesque and poetical eye, as he regards the Gothic edifices rich with the elaborate ornaments of a gorgeous and intricate style of architecture, without wishing to exchange therefor the stern but proud simplicity of his own habitation ; or, as he admires the romantic keeps and castles of chivalrous and feudal times, without desiring to revive the dangerous customs and warlike days in which they originated. To him the whole pageantry of emperors and kings, and nobles, and titled knights, is, as it were, a species of poetical machinery, addressing itself to his imagination, but no more affecting his faith than does the machinery of the heathen mythology affect the orthodoxy of the scholar, who delights in the strains of Homer and Virgil, and wanders with enthusiasm among the crumbling temples and sculptured deities of Greece and Rome ; or do the fairy mythology of the East, and the demonology of the North, impair the Christian faith of the poet or the novelist who interweaves them in his fictions.

We have been betrayed into these remarks, in considering the work before us, where we find one of our countrymen, and a thorough republican, investigating with minute attention some of the most antiquated and dubious tracts of European history, and treating of some of its exhausted and almost forgotten dynasties ; yet evincing throughout the enthusiasm of an antiquarian, the liberality of a scholar, and the enlightened toleration of a citizen of the world.

The author of the work before us, Mr. Henry Wheaton, has for some years filled the situation of *Chargé d'Affaires* at the court of Denmark. Since he has resided at Copenhagen, he has been led into a course of literary and historic research, which has ended in the production of the present history of those Gothic and Teutonic people, who, inhabiting the northern regions of Europe, have so often and so successfully made inroads into other countries, more genial

in climate and abundant in wealth. A considerable part of his book consists of what may be called conjectural or critical history, relating to remote and obscure periods of time, previous to the introduction of Christianity, historiography, and the use of Roman letters among those northern nations. At the outset, therefore, it assumes something of an austere and antiquarian air, which may daunt and discourage that class of readers who are accustomed to find history carefully laid out in easy rambling walks through agreeable landscapes, where just enough of the original roughness is left to produce the picturesque and romantic. Those, however, who have the courage to penetrate the dark and shadowy boundary of our author's work, grimly beset with hyperborean horrors, will find it resembling one of those enchanted forests described in northern poetry,—embosoming regions of wonder and delight, for such as have the hardihood to achieve the adventure. For our own part, we have been struck with the variety of adventurous incidents crowded into these pages, and with the abundance of that poetical material which is chiefly found in early history; while many of the rude traditions of the Normans, the Saxons, and the Danes have come to us with the captivating charms of early association, recalling the marvellous tales and legends that have delighted us in childhood.

The first seven chapters may be regarded as preliminary to the narrative, or, more strictly, historical part of the book. They trace the scanty knowledge possessed by Greek and Roman antiquity of the Scandinavian north; the earliest migrations from that quarter to the west, and south, and east of Europe; the discovery of Iceland by the Norwegians; with the singular circumstances which rendered that barren and volcanic isle, where ice and fire contend for mastery, the last asylum of Pagan faith and Scandinavian literature. In this wild region they lingered until the Latin alphabet superseded the Runic character, when the traditional poetry and oral history of the north were consigned to written records, and rescued from that indiscriminate destruction which overwhelmed them on the Scandinavian continent.

The government of Iceland is described by our author as being more properly a patriarchal aristocracy than a republic; and he observes that the Icelanders, in consequence of their adherence to their ancient religion, cherished and cultivated the language and literature of their ancestors, and brought

them to a degree of beauty and perfection which they never reached in the christianized countries of the north, where the introduction of the learned languages produced feeble and awkward, though classical imitation, instead of graceful and national originality.

When, at the end of the tenth century, Christianity was at length introduced into the island, the national literature, though existing only in oral tradition, was full blown, and had attained too strong and deep a root in the affections of the people to be eradicated, and had given a charm and value to the language with which it was identified. The Latin letters, therefore, which accompanied the introduction of the Romish religion, were merely adapted to designate the sounds heretofore expressed by Runic characters, and thus contributed to preserve in Iceland the ancient language of the north, when exiled from its parent countries of Scandinavia. To this fidelity to its ancient tongue, the rude and inhospitable shores of Iceland owe that charm which gives them an inexhaustible interest in the eyes of the antiquary, and endears them to the imagination of the poet. 'The popular superstitions,' observes our author, 'with which the mythology and poetry of the north are interwoven, continued still to linger in the sequestered glens of this remote island.'

The language in itself appears to have been worthy of this preservation, since we are told that 'it bears in its internal structure a strong resemblance to the Latin and Greek, and even to the ancient Persian and Sanscrit, and rivals in copiousness, flexibility and energy, every modern tongue.'

Before the introduction of letters, all Scandinavian knowledge was perpetuated in oral tradition by their Skalds, who, like the rhapsodists of ancient Greece, and the bards of the Celtic tribes, were at once poets and historians. We boast of the encouragement of letters and literary men in these days of refinement; but where are they more honored and rewarded than they were among these barbarians of the north? The Skalds, we are told, were the companions and chroniclers of kings, who entertained them in their trains, enriched them with rewards, and sometimes entered the lists with them in trials of skill in their art. They in a manner bound country to country, and people to people, by a delightful link of union, travelling about as wandering minstrels, from land to land, and often performing the office of ambassadors between hostile

tribes. While thus applying the gifts of genius to their divine and legitimate ends, by calming the passions of men, and harmonizing their feelings into kindly sympathy, they were looked up to with mingled reverence and affection, and a sacred character was attached to their calling. Nay, in such estimation were they held, that they occasionally married the daughters of princes, and one of them was actually raised to a throne in the fourth century of the Christian era.

It is true the Skalds were not always treated with equal deference, but were sometimes doomed to experience the usual caprice that attends upon royal patronage. We are told that Canute the Great retained several at his court, who were munificently rewarded for their encomiastic lays. One of them having composed a short poem in praise of his sovereign, hastened to recite it to him, but found him just rising from table, and surrounded by suitors.

‘The impatient poet craved an audience of the king for his lay, assuring him it was “very short.” The wrath of Canute was kindled, and he answered the Skald with a stern look,—“Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared,—to write a short poem upon me?—unless by the hour of dinner to-morrow you produce a *drapa* above thirty strophes long on the same subject, your life shall pay the penalty.” The inventive genius of the poet did not desert him: he produced the required poem, which was of the kind called *Tog-drapa*, and the king liberally rewarded him with fifty marks of silver.

‘Thus we perceive how the flowers of poetry sprung up and bloomed amidst eternal ice and snows. The arts of peace were successfully cultivated by the free and independent Icelanders. Their Arctic isle was not warmed by a Grecian sun, but their hearts glowed with the fire of freedom. The natural divisions of the country by icebergs and lava streams insulated the people from each other, and the inhabitants of each valley and each hamlet formed, as it were, an independent community. These were again reunited in the general national assembly of the Althing, which might not be unaptly likened to the Amphycitionic council or Olympic games, where all the tribes of the nation convened to offer the common rites of their religion, to decide their mutual differences, and to listen to the lays of the Skald, which commemorated the exploits of their ancestors. Their pastoral life was diversified by the occupation of fishing. Like the Greeks, too, the sea was their element, but even their shortest voyages bore them much farther from their native shores than

the boasted expedition of the Argonauts. Their familiarity with the perils of the ocean, and with the diversified manners and customs of foreign lands, stamped their national character with bold and original features, which distinguished them from every other people.

'The power of oral tradition, in thus transmitting, through a succession of ages, poetical or prose compositions of considerable length, may appear almost incredible to civilized nations accustomed to the art of writing. But it is well known, that even after the Homeric poems had been reduced to writing, the rhapsodists who had been accustomed to recite them could readily repeat any passage desired. And we have, in our own times, among the Servians, Calmucks, and other barbarous and semi-barbarous nations, examples of heroic and popular poems of great length thus preserved and handed down to posterity. This is more especially the case where there is a perpetual order of men, whose exclusive employment it is to learn and repeat, whose faculty of the memory is thus improved and carried to the highest pitch of perfection, and who are relied upon as historiographers to preserve the national annals. The interesting scene presented this day in every Icelandic family, in the long nights of winter, is a living proof of the existence of this ancient custom. No sooner does the day close, than the whole patriarchal family, domestics and all, are seated on their couches in the principal apartment, from the ceiling of which the reading and working lamp is suspended; and one of the family, selected for that purpose, takes his seat near the lamp, and begins to read some favorite Saga, or it may be the works of Klopstock and Milton (for these have been translated into Icelandic,) whilst all the rest attentively listen, and are at the same time engaged in their respective occupations. From the scarcity of printed books in this poor and sequestered country, in some families the Sagas are recited by those who have committed them to memory, and there are still instances of itinerant orators of this sort, who gain a livelihood during the winter by going about, from house to house, repeating the stories they have thus learnt by heart.'

The most prominent feature of Icelandic verse, according to our author, is its alliteration. In this respect it resembles the poetry of all rude periods of society. That of the eastern nations, the Hebrews and the Persians, is full of this ornament; and it is found even among the classic poets of Greece and Rome. These observations of Mr. Wheaton are supported by those of Dr. Henderson,* who states that the funda-

* Henderson's Iceland. Edinb. 1819. Appendix III.

mental rule in Icelandic poetry required that there should be three words in every couplet having the same initial letter, two of which should be in the former hemistich, and one in the latter. The following translation from Milton is furnished as a specimen.

*Vid that Villu diup
Vard annum slæga,
Böloerk Bidleikat
Barmi vitis å.*

‘Into this wild abyss the wary Fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and looked ;—

As a specimen of the tales related by the Skalds, we may cite that of Sigurd and the beauteous Brynhilda, a royal virgin, who is described as living in a lonely castle, encircled by magic flames.

In the Teutonic lay, Brynhilda is a mere mortal virgin; but in the Icelandic poem she becomes a Valkyria, one of those demi-divinities, servants of Odin or Woden in the Gothic mythology, who were appointed to watch over the fate of battle, and were, as their name betokens, selectors of the slain. They were clothed in armor, and mounted on fleet horses, with drawn swords, and mingled in the shock of battle, choosing the warrior-victims, and conducting them to Valhalla, the hall of Odin, where they joined the banquet of departed heroes, in carousals of mead and beer.

The first interview of the hero and heroine is wildly romantic. Sigurd, journeying toward Franconia, sees a flaming light upon a lofty mountain: he approaches it, and beholds a warrior in full armor asleep upon the ground. On removing the helmet of the slumberer, he discovers the supposed knight to be an Amazon. Her armor clings to her body, so that he is obliged to separate it with his sword. She then arises from her death-like sleep, and apprises him that he has broken the spell by which she lay entranced. She had been thrown into this lethargic state by Odin, in punishment for having disobeyed his orders. In a combat between two knights, she had caused the death of him who should have had the victory.

This romantic tale has been agreeably versified by William Spencer, an elegant and accomplished genius, who has just furnished the world with sufficient proofs of his talents to cause regret that they did not fall to the lot of a more industrious

man. We subjoin the fragments of his poem cited by our author.

‘O strange is the bower where Brynhilda reclines,
Around it the watch-fire high bickering shines !
Her couch is of iron, her pillow a shield,
And the maiden’s chaste eyes are in deep slumber sealed ;
Thy charm, dreadful Odin, around her is spread,
From thy wand the dread slumber was poured on her head.
O whilom in battle so bold and so free,
Like a *Vikingr* victorious she roved o’er the sea.
The love-lighting eyes, which are fettered by sleep,
Have seen the sea-fight raging fierce o’er the deep ;
And mid the dread wounds of the dying and slain,
The tide of destruction poured wide o’er the plain.

‘ Who is it that spurs his dark steed at the fire ?
Who is it, whose wishes thus boldly aspire
To the chamber of shields, where the beautiful maid
By the spell of the mighty All-Father is laid ?
It is Sigurd the valiant, the slayer of kings,
With the spoils of the Dragon, his gold and his rings.’

BRYNHILDA.

* * * * *

‘ Like a Virgin of the Shield I roved o’er the sea,
My arm was victorious, my valor was free.
By prowess, by Runic enchantment and song,
I raised up the weak, and I beat down the strong ;
I held the young prince mid the hurly of war,
My arm waved around him the charmed scimitar ;
I saved him in battle, I crowned him in hall,
Though Odin and Fate had foredoomed him to fall :
Hence Odin’s dread curses were poured on my head ;
He doomed the undaunted Brynhilda to wed.
But I vowed the high vow which gods dare not gainsay,
That the boldest in warfare should bear me away :
And full well I knew that thou, Sigurd, alone
Of mortals the boldest in battle hast shone ;
I knew that none other the furnace could stem,
(So wrought was the spell, and so fierce was the flame,)
Save Sigurd the glorious, the slayer of kings,
With the spoils of the Dragon, his gold and his rings.’

The story in the original runs through several cantos, com-

prising varied specimens of those antique Gothic compositions, which, to use the words of our author,

‘are not only full of singularly wild and beautiful poetry, and lively pictures of the manners and customs of the heroic age of the ancient north, its patriarchal simplicity, its deadly feuds, and its fanciful superstition, peopling the earth, air, and waters with deities, giants, genii, nymphs, and dwarfs; but there are many exquisite touches of the deepest pathos, to which the human heart beats in unison in every age and in every land.’

Many of these hyperborean poems, he remarks, have an oriental character and coloring in their subjects and imagery, their mythology and their style, bearing internal evidence of their having been composed in remote antiquity, and in regions less removed from the cradle of the human race than the Scandinavian north. ‘The oldest of this fragmentary poetry,’ as he finely observes, ‘may be compared to the gigantic remains, the wrecks of a more ancient world, or to the ruins of Egypt and Hindostan, speaking a more perfect civilization, the glories of which have long since departed.’

Our author gives us many curious glances at the popular superstitions of the north, and those poetic and mythic fictions which pervaded the great Scandinavian family of nations. The charmed armor of the warrior; the dragon who keeps a sleepless watch over buried treasure; the spirits or genii that haunt the rocky tops of mountains, or the depths of quiet lakes; and the elves or vagrant demons which wander through forests, or by lonely hills; these are found in all the popular superstitions of the north. *Ditmarus Blefkenius* tells us that the Icelanders believed in domestic spirits, which woke them at night to go and fish; and that all expeditions to which they were thus summoned were eminently fortunate. The watersprites, originating in Icelandic poetry, may be traced throughout the north of Europe. The Swedes delight to tell of the *Strömkerl*, or boy of the stream, who haunts the glassy brooks that steal gently through green meadows, and sits on the silver waves at moonlight, playing his harp to the elves who dance on the flowery margin. Scarcely a rivulet in Germany also but has its *Wasser-nixe*, or water-witches, all evidently members of the great northern family.

Before we leave this enchanted ground, we must make a few observations on the Runic characters, which were regard-

ed with so much awe in days of yore, as locking up darker mysteries and more potent spells than the once redoubtable hieroglyphics of the Egyptians. The Runic alphabet, according to our author, consists properly of sixteen letters. Northern tradition attributes them to Odin, who, perhaps, brought them into Scandinavia, but they have no resemblance to any of the alphabets of central Asia. Inscriptions in these characters are still to be seen on rocks and stone monuments in Sweden, and other countries of the north, containing Scandinavian verses in praise of their ancient heroes. They were also engraved on arms, trinkets, amulets, and utensils, and sometimes on the bark of trees, and on wooden tablets, for the purpose of memorials or of epistolary correspondence. In one of the Eddaic poems, Odin is represented as boasting the magic power of the Runic rhymes, to heal diseases and counteract poison ; to spell-bind the arms of an enemy ; to lull the tempest ; to stop the career of witches through the air ; to raise the dead, and extort from them the secrets of the world of spirits. The reader who may desire to see the letters of this all-potent alphabet, will find them in Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*.

In his sixth chapter, Mr. Wheaton gives an account of the religion of Odin, and his migration, with a colony of Scythian Goths, from the banks of the Tanais, in Asia, to the peninsula of Scandinavia, to escape the Roman legions. Without emulating his minute and interesting detail, we will merely and briefly state some of the leading particulars, and refer the curious reader to the pages of his book.

The expedition of this mythological hero is stated to have taken place about seventy years before the Christian era, when Pompey the Great, then consul of Rome, finished the war with Tigranes and Mithridates, and carried his victorious arms throughout the most important parts of Asia. We quote a description of the wonderful vessel Skidbladner, the ship of the gods, in which he made the voyage.

‘ Skidbladner,’ said one of the genii, when interrogated by Gangler, ‘ is one of the best ships, and most curiously constructed. It was built by certain dwarfs, who made a present of it to Freyn. It is so vast that there is room to hold all the deities, with their armor. As soon as the sails are spread, it directs its course, with a favorable breeze, wherever they desire to navigate ; and when they wish to land, such is its marvellous construction, that it can be taken to pieces, rolled up, and put in the pocket.’

‘That is an excellent ship, indeed,’ replied Gangler, ‘and must have required much science and magic art to construct.’—p. 118.

With this very convenient, portable, and pocketable ship, and a crew of Goths of the race of Sviar, called by Tacitus *Suiones*, the intrepid Odin departed from Scythia, to escape the domination of the Romans, who were spreading themselves over the world. He took with him also his twelve pontiffs, who were at once priests of religion and judges of the law. Whenever sea or river intervened, he launched his good ship *Skidbladner*, embarked with his band, and sailed merrily over; then landing, and pocketing the transport, he again put himself at the head of his crew, and marched steadily forward. To add to the facilities of these primitive emigrants, Odin was himself a seer and a magician. He could look into futurity; could strike his enemies with deafness, blindness, and sudden panic; could blunt the edge of their weapons, and render his own warriors invisible. He could transform himself into bird, beast, fish, or serpent, and fly to the most distant regions, while his body remained in a trance. He could, with a single word, extinguish fire, control the winds, and bring the dead to life. He carried about with him an embalmed and charmed head, which would reply to his questions, and give him information of what was passing in the remotest lands. He had, moreover, two most gifted and confidential ravens, who had the gift of speech, and would fly, on his behests, to the uttermost parts of the earth. We have only to believe in the supernatural powers of such a leader, provided with such a ship, and such an oracular head, attended by two such marvellously-gifted birds, and backed by a throng of staunch and stalwart Gothic followers, and we shall not wonder that he found but little difficulty in making his way to the peninsula of Scandinavia, and in expelling the aboriginal inhabitants, who seem to have been but a diminutive and stunted race; although there are not wanting fabulous narrators, who would fain persuade us there were giants among them. They were gradually subdued and reduced to servitude, or driven to the mountains, and subsequently to the desert wilds and fastnesses of Norrland, Lapland, and Finland, where they continued to adhere to that form of polytheism called *Fetishism*, or the adoration of birds and beasts, stocks and stones, and all the animate and inanimate works of creation.

As to Odin, he introduced into his new dominions the religion he had brought with him from the banks of the Tanais ; but, like the early heroes of most barbarous nations, he was destined to become himself an object of adoration ; for though to all appearance he died, and was consumed on a funeral pile, it was said that he was translated to the blissful abode of Godheim, there to enjoy eternal life. In process of time it was declared, that, though a mere prophet on earth, he had been an incarnation of the Supreme Deity, and had returned to the sacred hall of Valhalla, the paradise of the brave, where, surrounded by his late companions in arms, he watched over the deeds and destinies of the children of men.

The primitive people who had been conquered by Odin and his followers, seem to have been as diminutive in spirit as in form, and withal a rancorous race of little vermin, whose expulsion from their native land awakens but faint sympathy ; yet candor compels us to add, that their conquerors are not much more entitled to our esteem, although their hardy deeds command our admiration. The author gives a slight sketch of the personal peculiarities which discriminated both, extracted from an Eddaic poem, and which is worthy of notice, as accounting, as far as the authority is respected, for some of the diversities in feature and complexion of the Scandinavian races.

' The slave caste, descended from the Aboriginal Finns, were distinguished from their conquerors by black hair and complexion * * * * *. The caste of freemen and freeholders, lords of the soil which they cultivated, and descended from the Gothic conquerors, had reddish hair, fair complexion, and all the traits which peculiarly mark that famous race * * *—while the caste of the illustrious Jarls and the Hersen, earls and barons, were distinguished by still fairer hair and skin, and by noble employments and manners : from these descended the kingly race, skilled in Runic science, in manly exercises, and the military art.'

The manners, customs, and superstitions of these northern people, which afterwards, with various modifications, pervaded and stamped an indelible character on so great a part of Europe, deserve to be more particularly mentioned ; and we give a brief view of them, chiefly taken from the work of our author, and partly from other sources. The religion of the early Scan-

dinavians taught the existence of a Supreme Being, called Thor, who ruled over the elements, purified the air with refreshing showers, dispensed health and sickness, wielded the thunder and lightning, and with his celestial weapon, the rainbow, launched unerring arrows at the evil demons. He was worshipped in a primitive but striking manner, amidst the solemn majesty of nature, on the tops of mountains, in the depths of primeval forests, or in those groves which rose like natural temples on islands surrounded by the dark waters of lonely and silent lakes. They had, likewise, their minor deities, or genii, whom we have already mentioned, who were supposed to inhabit the sun, the moon, and stars,—the regions of the air, the trees, the rocks, the brooks and mountains of the earth, and to superintend the phenomena of their respective elements. They believed, also, in a future state of torment for the guilty, and of voluptuous and sensual enjoyment for the virtuous.

This primitive religion gave place to more complicated beliefs. Odin, elevated, as we have shown, into a divinity, was worshipped as the Supreme Deity, and with him was associated his wife Freya; from these are derived our Odensday, —Wodensday or Wednesday,—and our Freytag, or Friday. Thor, from whom comes Thursday, was now more limited in his sway, though he still bent the rainbow, launched the thunderbolt, and controlled the seasons. These three were the principal deities, and held assemblies of those of inferior rank and power. The mythology had also its devil, called Loke, a most potent and malignant spirit, and supposed to be the cause of all evil.

By degrees the religious rites of the northern people became more artificial and ostentatious; they were performed in temples, with something of Asiatic pomp. Festivals were introduced of symbolical and mystic import, at the summer and the winter solstice, and at various other periods; in which were typified, not merely the decline and renovation of nature and the changes of the seasons, but the epochs in the moral history of man. As the ceremonials of religion became more dark and mysterious, they assumed a cruel and sanguinary character; prisoners taken in battle were sacrificed by the victors, subjects by their kings, and sometimes even children by their parents. Superstition gradually spread its illusions over all the phenomena of nature, and gave each some occult meaning; oracles,

lots, auguries, and divination gained implicit faith ; and sooth-sayers read the decrees of fate in the flight of birds, the sound of thunder, and the entrails of the victim. Every man was supposed to have his attendant spirit, his destiny, which it was out of his power to avert, and his appointed hour to die ;—Odin, however, could control or alter the destiny of a mortal, and defer the fatal hour. It was believed, also, that a man's life might be prolonged if another would devote himself to death in his stead.

The belief in magic was the natural attendant upon these superstitions. Charms and spells were practised, and the Runic rhymes, known but to the gifted few, acquired their reputation among the ignorant multitude, for an all-potent and terrific influence over the secrets of nature and the actions and destinies of man.

As war was the principal and the only noble occupation of these people, their moral code was suitably brief and stern. After profound devotion to the gods, valor in war was inculcated as the supreme virtue, cowardice as the deadly sin. Those who fell gloriously in war were at once transported to Valhalla, the airy hall of Odin, there to partake of the eternal felicities of the brave. Fighting and feasting, which had constituted their fierce joys on earth, were lavished upon them in this supernal abode. Every day they had combats in the listed field,—the rush of steeds, the flash of swords, the shining of lances, and all the maddening tumult and din of battle ;—helmets and bucklers were riven,—horses and riders overthrown, and ghastly wounds exchanged ; but at the setting of the sun all was over ; victors and vanquished met unscathed in glorious companionship around the festive board of Odin in Valhalla's hall, where they partook of the ample banquet, and quaffed full horns of beer and fragrant mead. For the just who did not die in fight, a more peaceful but less glorious elysium was provided ;—a resplendent golden palace, surrounded by verdant meads and shady groves and fields of spontaneous fertility.

The early training of their youth was suited to the creed of this warlike people. In the tender days of childhood they were gradually hardened by athletic exercises, and nurtured through boyhood in difficult and daring feats. At the age of fifteen they were produced before some public assemblage, and presented with a sword, a buckler, and a lance : from that

time forth they mingled among men, and were expected to support themselves by hunting or warfare. But though thus early initiated in the rough and dangerous concerns of men, they were prohibited all indulgence with the softer sex until matured in years and vigor.

Their weapons of offence were bow and arrow, battle-axe and sword; and the latter was often engraved with some mystic characters, and bore a formidable and vaunting name.

The helmets of the common soldiery were of leather, and their bucklers leather and wood; but warriors of rank had helmets and shields of iron and brass, sometimes richly gilt and decorated; and they wore coats of mail, and occasionally plated armor.

A young chieftain of generous birth received higher endowments than the common class. Beside the hardy exercise of the chase and the other exercises connected with the use of arms, he was initiated betimes into the sacred science of the Runic writing, and instructed in the ancient lay, especially if destined for sovereignty, as every king was the pontiff of his people. When a prince had attained the age of eighteen, his father usually gave him a small fleet and a band of warriors, and sent him on some marauding voyage, from which it was disgraceful to return with empty hands.

Such was the moral and physical training of the Northmen, which prepared them for that wide and wild career of enterprise and conquest which has left its traces along all the coasts of Europe, and thrown communities and colonies, in the most distant regions, to remain themes of wonder and speculation in after ages. Actuated by the same roving and predatory spirit which had brought their Scythian ancestors from the banks of the Tanais, and rendered daring navigators by their experience along the stormy coasts of the north, they soon extended their warlike roamings over the ocean, and became complete maritime marauders, with whom piracy at sea was equivalent to chivalry on shore, and a freebooting cruise to a heroic enterprise.

For a time, the barks in which they braved the dangers of the sea, and infested the coasts of England and France, were mere canoes, formed from the trunks of trees, and so light as readily to be carried on men's shoulders, or dragged along the land. With these they suddenly swarmed upon a devoted coast, sailing up the rivers, shifting from stream to stream, and

often making their way back to the sea by some different river from that they had ascended. Their chiefs obtained the appellation of sea-kings, because, to the astonished inhabitants of the invaded coasts, they seemed to emerge suddenly from the ocean, and when they had finished their ravages, to retire again into its bosom as to their native home ; and they were rightly named, in the opinion of the author of a northern *Saga*, seeing that their lives were passed upon the waves, and ‘they never sought shelter under a roof, or drained their drinking horn at a cottage fire.’

Though plunder seemed to be the main object of this wild ocean chivalry, they had still that passion for martial renown, which grows up with the exercise of arms, however rude and lawless, and which in them was stimulated by the songs of the skalds.

We are told that they were ‘sometimes seized with a sort of phrenzy, a *furor Martis*, produced by their excited imaginations dwelling upon the images of war and glory, and perhaps increased by those potations of stimulating liquors in which the people of the north, like other uncivilized tribes, indulged to great excess. When this madness was upon them, they committed the wildest extravagances, attacked indiscriminately friends and foes, and even waged war against the rocks and trees. At other times they defied each other to mortal combat in some lonely and desert isle.’

Among the most renowned of these early sea-kings was Ragnar Lodbrok, famous for his invasion of Northumbria, in England, and no less famous in ancient *Sagas* for his strange and cruel death. According to those poetic legends, he was a king of Denmark, who ruled his realms in peace, without being troubled with any dreams of conquest. His sons, however, were roving the seas with their warlike followers, and after a time tidings of their heroic exploits reached his court. The jealousy of Ragnar was excited, and he determined on an expedition that should rival their achievements. He accordingly ordered ‘the Arrow,’ the signal of war, to be sent through his dominions, summoning his ‘champions’ to arms. He had ordered two ships of immense size to be built, and in them he embarked with his followers. His faithful and discreet queen, Aslauga, warned him of the perils to which he was exposing himself, but in vain. He set sail for the north of England, which had formerly been invaded by his prede-

cessors. The expedition was driven back to port by a tempest. The queen repeated her warnings and entreaties, but finding them unavailing, she gave him a magical garment that had the virtue to render the wearer invulnerable.

‘Ragnar again put to sea, and was at last shipwrecked on the English coast. In this emergency his courage did not desert him, but he pushed forward with his small band to ravage and plunder. Ella collected his forces to repel the invader. Ragnar, clothed with the enchanted garment he had received from his beloved Aslauga, and armed with the spear with which he had slain the guardian serpent of Thora, four times pierced the Saxon ranks, dealing death on every side, whilst his own body was invulnerable to the blows of his enemies. His friends and champions fell one by one around him, and he was at last taken prisoner alive. Being asked, who he was, he preserved an indignant silence. Then king Ella said:—“If this man will not speak, he shall endure so much the heavier punishment for his obduracy and contempt.” So he ordered him to be thrown into the dungeon full of serpents, where he should remain till he told his name. Ragnar, being thrown into the dungeon, sat there a long time before the serpents attacked him; which being noticed by the spectators, they said he must be a brave man indeed whom neither arms nor vipers could hurt. Ella, hearing this, ordered his enchanted vest to be stripped off, and, soon afterwards, the serpents clung to him on all sides. Then Ragnar said, “how the young cubs would roar if they knew what the old boar suffers,” and expired with a laugh of defiance.’—pp. 152, 153.

The death-song of Ragnar Lodbrok will be found in an appendix to Henderson’s *Iceland*, both in the original and in a translation. The version, however, which is in prose, conveys but faintly the poetic spirit of the original. It consists of twenty-nine stanzas, most of them of nine lines, and contains, like the death-song of a warrior among the American Indians, a boastful narrative of his expeditions and exploits. Each stanza bears the same burden:

‘*Hiuggom ver med hiarvi.*’

‘We hewed them with our swords.’

Lodbrok exults that his achievements entitle him to admission among the gods; predicts that his children shall avenge his death; and glories that no sigh shall disgrace his exit. In the last stanza he hails the arrival of celestial virgins sent to invite him to the Hall of Odin, where he shall join the assembly of heroes, sit upon a lofty throne, and quaff the mellow beverage

of barley. The last strophe of this death-song is thus rendered by Mr. Wheaton :

‘Cease my strain ! I hear Them call
Who bid me hence to Odin’s hall !
High seated in their blest abodes,
I soon shall quaff the drink of Gods.
The hours of Life have glided by,—
I fall ! but laughing will I die !
The hours of Life have glided by,—
I fall ! but laughing will I die !!’

The sons of Ragnar, if the Sagas may be believed, were not slow in revenging the death of their parent. They were absent from home on warlike expeditions at the time, and did not hear of the catastrophe until after their return to Denmark. Their first tidings of it were from the messengers of Ella, sent to propitiate their hostility. When the messengers entered the royal hall, they found the sons of Ragnar variously employed. Sigurdr Snakeseye was playing at chess with his brother Huitserk the Brave ; while Björn Ironside was polishing the handle of his spear in the middle pavement of the hall. The messengers approached to where Ivar, the other brother, was sitting, and, saluting him with due reverence, told him they were sent by King Ella to announce the death of his royal father.

‘As they began to unfold their tale, Sigurdr and Huitserk dropped their game, carefully weighing what was said. Björn stood in the midst of the hall, leaning on his spear : but Ivar diligently inquired by what means, and by what kind of death, his father had perished : which the messengers related, from his first arrival in England, till his death. When, in the course of their narrative, they came to the words of the dying king, “ how the young whelps would roar if they knew their father’s fate,” Björn grasped the handle of his spear so fast, that the prints of his fingers remained ; and when the tale was done, dashed the spear in pieces. Huitserk pressed the chess-board so hard with his hands, that they bled.

‘Ivar changed color continually, now red, now black, now pale, whilst he struggled to suppress his kindling wrath.

‘Huitserk the Brave, who first broke silence, proposed to begin their revenge by the death of the messengers ; which Ivar forbade, commanding them to go in peace, wherever they would, and if they wanted any thing they should be supplied.

‘Their mission being fulfilled, the delegates, passing through the hall, went down to their ships; and the wind being favorable, returned safely to their king. Ella, hearing from them how his message had been received by the princes, said that he foresaw that of all the brothers, Ivar or none was to be feared.’—pp. 188, 189.

The princes summoned their followers, launched their fleets, and attacked king Ella in the spring of 867.

‘The battle took place at York, and the Anglo-Saxons were entirely routed. The sons of Ragnar inflicted a cruel and savage retaliation on Ella for his barbarous treatment of their father.

‘After this battle, Northumbria appears no more as a Saxon kingdom, and Ivar was made king over that part of England which his ancestors had possessed, or into which they had made repeated incursions.’—pp. 189, 190.

Encouraged by the success that attended their enterprises in the northern seas, the Northmen now urged their adventurous prows into more distant regions, besetting the southern coasts of France with their fleets of light and diminutive barks. Charlemagne is said to have witnessed the inroad of one of their fleets from the windows of his palace, in the harbor of Narbonne; upon which he lamented the fate of his successors, who would have to contend with such audacious invaders. They entered the Loire, sacked the city of Nantz, and carried their victorious arms up to Tours. They ascended the Garonne, pillaged Bordeaux, and extended their incursion even to Toulouse. They also entered the Seine in 845, ravaging its banks, and pushing their enterprise to the very gates of Paris, compelled the monarch Charles to take refuge in the monastery of St. Denis, where he was fain to receive the piratical chieftain, Regnier, and to pay him a tribute of 7000 pounds of silver, on condition of his evacuating his capital and kingdom. Regnier, besides immense booty, carried back to Denmark, as trophies of his triumph, a beam from the abbey of St. Germain, and a nail from the gate of Paris; but his followers spread over their native country a contagious disease which they had contracted in France.

Spain was, in like manner, subject to their invasions. They ascended the Guadalquivir, attacked the great city of Seville, and demolished its fortifications, after severe battles with the Moors, who were then sovereigns of that country, and who re-

garded these unknown invaders from the sea as magicians, on account of their wonderful daring, and still more wonderful success. As the author well observes, 'the contrast between these two races of fanatic barbarians, the one issuing forth from the frozen regions of the north, the other from the burning sands of Asia and Africa, forms one of the most striking pictures presented by history.'

The Straits of Gibraltar being passed by these rovers of the north, the Mediterranean became another region for their exploits. Hastings, one of their boldest chieftains, and father of that Hastings who afterwards battled with King Alfred for the sovereignty of England, accompanied by Biorn Ironside and Sydroc, two sons of Ragnar Lodbrok, undertook an expedition against Rome, the capital of the world, tempted by accounts of its opulence and splendor, but not precisely acquainted with its site. They penetrated the Mediterranean with a fleet of one hundred barks, and entered the port of Luna in Tuscany, an ancient city, whose high walls and towers, and stately edifices, made them mistake it for imperial Rome.

'The inhabitants were celebrating the festival of Christmas in the cathedral, when the news was spread among them of the arrival of a fleet of unknown strangers. The church was instantly deserted, and the citizens ran to shut the gates, and prepared to defend their town. Hastings sent a herald to inform the count and bishop of Luna that he and his band were Northmen, conquerors of the Franks, who designed no harm to the inhabitants of Italy, but merely sought to repair their shattered barks. In order to inspire more confidence, Hastings pretended to be weary of the wandering life he had so long led, and desired to find repose in the bosom of the Christian church. The bishop and the count furnished the fleet with the needful succor; Hastings was baptised; but still his Norman followers were not admitted within the city walls. Their chief was then obliged to resort to another stratagem: he feigned to be dangerously ill; his camp resounded with the lamentations of his followers; he declared his intention of leaving the rich booty he had acquired to the church, provided they would grant him sepulture in holy ground. The wild howl of the Normans soon announced the death of their chieftain. The inhabitants followed the funeral procession to the church, but at the moment they were about to deposit his apparently lifeless body, Hastings started up from his coffin, and, seizing his sword, struck down the officiating bishop. His

followers instantly obeyed this signal of treachery: they drew from under their garments their concealed weapons, massacred the clergy and others who assisted at the ceremony, and spread havoc and consternation throughout the town. Having thus become master of Luna, the Norman chieftain discovered his error, and found that he was still far from Rome, which was not likely to fall so easy a prey. After having transported on board his barks the wealth of the city, as well as the most beautiful women, and the young men capable of bearing arms or of rowing, he put to sea, intending to return to the north.

'The Italian traditions as to the destruction of this city resemble more nearly the romance of Romeo and Juliet, than the history of the Scandinavian adventurer. According to these accounts, the prince of Luna was inflamed with the beauty of a certain young empress, then travelling in company with the emperor her husband. Their passion was mutual, and the two lovers had recourse to the following stratagem, in order to accomplish their union. The empress feigned to be grievously sick: she was believed to be dead; her funeral obsequies were duly celebrated; but she escaped from the sepulchre, and secretly rejoined her lover. The emperor had no sooner heard of their crime, than he marched to attack the residence of the ravisher, and avenged himself by the entire destruction of the once flourishing city of Luna. The only point of resemblance between these two stories consists in the romantic incident of the destruction of the city by means of a feigned death, a legend which spread abroad over Italy and France.'

The last and greatest of the sea-kings, or pirate heroes of the north, was Rollo, surnamed *Ferus Fortis*, the Lusty Boar or Hardy Beast, from whom William the Conqueror comes in lineal, though not legitimate, descent. Our limits do not permit us to detail the early history of this warrior, as selected by our author from among the fables of the Norman chronicles, and the more simple, and, he thinks, more veritable narratives in the Icelandic Sagas. We shall merely state that Rollo arrived with a band of Northmen, all fugitive adventurers, like himself, upon the coast of France; ascended the Seine to Rouen, subjugated the fertile province then called Neustria; named it Normandy from the Northmen, his followers, and crowned himself first Duke.

'Under his firm and vigorous rule, the blessings of order and peace were restored to a country which had so long and so cruelly suffered from the incursions of the northern adventurers.

He tolerated the Christians in their worship, and they flocked in crowds to live under the dominion of a Pagan and barbarian, in preference to their own native and Christian prince (Charles the Simple) who was unwilling or incapable to protect them.'

Rollo established in his duchy of Normandy a feudal aristocracy, or rather it grew out of the circumstances of the country. His followers elected him duke, and he made them counts and barons and knights. The clergy also pressed themselves into his great council or parliament. The laws were reduced to a system by men of acute intellect, and this system of feudal law was subsequently transplanted by William the Conqueror into England, as a means of consolidating his power and establishing his monarchy.

'Rollo is said also to have established the Court of Exchequer as the supreme tribunal of justice; and the perfect security afforded by the admirable system of police established in England by King Alfred is likewise attributed to the legislation of the first Duke of Normandy.'—p. 252.

Trial by battle, or judicial combat, was a favorite appeal to God by the warlike nations of Scandinavia, as by most of the barbarous tribes who established themselves on the ruin of the Roman empire. It had fallen into disuse in France, but was revived by Rollo in Normandy, although the clergy were solicitous to substitute the ordeal of fire and water, which brought controversies within their control. The fierce Norman warriors disdained this clerical mode of decision, and strenuously insisted on the appeal to the sword. They afterwards, at the conquest, introduced the trial by combat into England, where it became a part of the common law.*

*A statue or effigy of Rollo, over a sarcophagus, is still to be seen in the cathedral at Rouen, with a Latin inscription, stating that he was converted to Christianity in 913, and died in 917, and that his bones were removed to this spot from their place of original sepulture, in A.D. 1063. The ancient epitaph, in rhyming monkish Latin, has been lost, except the following lines:

Dux Normanorum
Cunctorum,
Norma Bonorum.
Rollo, Ferus fortis,
Quem gens Normanica mortis
Invocat articulo,
Clauditur hoc tumulo.

A spirit of chivalry and love of daring adventure, a romantic gallantry towards the sex, and a zealous devotion were blended in the character of the Norman knights. These high and generous feelings they brought with them into England, and bore with them in their crusades into the Holy Land. Poetry also continued to be cherished and cultivated among them, and the Norman troubadour succeeded to the Scandinavian skald. The Dukes of Normandy and Anglo-Norman kings were practisers as well as patrons of this delightful art; and Henry I., surnamed Beauclerc, and Richard Cœur de Lion, were distinguished among the poetical composers of their day.

'The Norman minstrel,' to quote the words of our author, 'appropriated the fictions they found already accredited among the people for whom they versified. The British King Arthur, his fabled knights of the Round Table, and the enchanter Merlin, with his wonderful prophecies; the Frankish monarch Charlemagne and his paladins; and the rich inventions of Oriental fancy borrowed from the Arabs and the Moors.'—p. 262.

We have thus cursorily accompanied our author in his details of the origin and character, the laws and superstitions, and primitive religion, and also of the roving expeditions and conquests of the Northmen; and we give him credit for the judgment and candor and careful research, with which he has gleaned and collated his interesting facts, from the rubbish of fables and fictions with which they were bewildered and obscured.

Another leading feature in his work, is the conversion of the Northmen, and the countries from which they came, to the Christian faith. An attempt to condense or analyze this part of his work would lead us too far, and do injustice to the minuteness and accuracy of his details. We must, for like reasons, refer the reader to the work itself for the residue of its

Imitation.

Rollo, that hardy Boar
 Renowned of yore,
 Of all the Normans Duke;
 Whose name with dying breath
 In article of death,
 All Norman knights invoke;
 That mirror of the bold,
 This tomb doth hold.

contents. We shall merely remark, that he goes over the same ground with the English historians, Hume, Turner, Lindgard, and Palgrave, gleaning from the original authorities whatever may have been omitted by them. He has also occasionally corrected some errors into which they have fallen, through want of more complete access or more critical attention to the Icelandic sagas and the Danish and Swedish historians, who narrated the successful invasion of England by the Danes, under Canute, and its final conquest by William of Normandy.

We shall take leave of our author with some extracts from the triumphant invasion of William, premising a few words concerning his origin and early history. Robert Duke of Normandy, called Robert the Magnificent by his flatterers, but more commonly known as Robert the Devil, from his wild and savage nature, had an amour with Arlette, the daughter of a tanner, or currier, of Falaise, in Normandy. The damsel gave birth to a male child, who was called William. While the boy was yet in childhood, Robert the Devil resolved to expiate his sins by a pilgrimage to the Holy Land; and compelled his counts and barons to swear fealty to his son. 'Par ma foi,' said Robert, 'je ne vous laisserai point sans seigneur. J'ai un petit bâtard qui grandira s'il plait à Dieu. Choisisez le dès ce présent, et je le saiserais devant vous de ce duché comme mon successeur.' The Norman lords placed their hands between the hands of the child, and swore fidelity to him according to feudal usage. Robert the Devil set out on his pious pilgrimage, and died at Nice. The right of the boy William was contested by Guy, Count of Burgundy, and other claimants, but he made it good with his sword, and then confirmed it by espousing Matilda, daughter of the Count of Flanders.

On the death of Edward the Confessor, King of England, Harold, from his fleetness surnamed Harefoot, one of the bravest nobles of the realm, assumed the crown, to the exclusion of Edgar Atheling, the lawful heir. It was said that Edward had named Harold to succeed him. William Duke of Normandy laid claim to the English throne. We have not room in this review to investigate his title, which was little more than bare pretension. He alleged that Edward the Confessor had promised to bequeath to him the crown; but his chief reliance was upon his sword. Harold, while yet a subject, had fallen by accident within the power of William,

who had obtained from him, by cajolery and extortion, an oath, sworn on certain sacred reliques, not to impede him in his plans to gain the English crown.

William prepared an expedition in Normandy, and published a war ban, inviting adventurers of all countries to join him in the invasion of England, and partake the pillage. He procured a consecrated banner from the Pope under the promise of a portion of the spoil, and embarked a force of nearly sixty thousand men on board four hundred vessels and above a thousand boats.

‘The ship which bore William preceded the rest of the fleet, with the consecrated banner of the Pope displayed at the mast head, its many-colored sails embellished with the lions of Normandy, and its prow adorned with the figure of an infant archer bending his bow and ready to let fly his arrow.’

William landed his force at Pevensey, near Hastings, on the coast of Sussex, on the 28th of September, 1066; and we shall state from the Norman chronicles some few particulars of this interesting event, not included in the volume under review. The archers disembarked first,—they had short vestments and cropped hair; then the horsemen, armed with coats of mail, caps of iron, straight two-edged swords, and long powerful lances; then the pioneers and artificers, who disembarked, piece by piece, the materials for three wooden towers, all ready to be put together. The Duke was the last to land, for, says the chronicle, ‘there was no opposing enemy.’ King Harold was in Northumbria, repelling an army of Norwegian invaders.

As William leaped on shore, he stumbled and fell upon his face. Exclamations of foreboding were heard among his followers; but he grasped the earth with his hands, and raising them filled with it towards the heavens, ‘Thus,’ cried he, ‘do I seize upon this land, and by the splendor of God, as far as it extends, it shall be mine.’ His ready wit thus converted a sinister accident into a favorable omen. Having pitched his camp and reared his wooden towers near to the town of Hastings, he sent forth his troops to forage and lay waste the country; nor were even the churches and cemeteries held sacred to which the English had fled for refuge.

Harold was at York, reposing after a victory over the Norwegians, in which he had been wounded, when he heard of this new invasion. Undervaluing the foe, he set forth instantly

with such force as he could muster, though a few days' delay would have brought great reinforcements. On his way he met a Norman monk, sent to him by William, with three alternatives : 1. To abdicate in his favor. 2. To refer their claims to the decision of the Pope. 3. To determine them by single combat. Harold refused all three, and quickened his march ; but finding, as he drew nearer, that the Norman army was thrice the number of his own, he intrenched his host seven miles from their camp, upon a range of hills, behind a rampart of palisadoes and osier hurdles.

The impending night of the battle was passed by the Normans in warlike preparations, or in confessing their sins and receiving the sacrament, and the camp resounded with the prayers and chantings of priests and friars. As to the Saxon warriors, they sat round their camp-fires, carousing horns of beer and wine, and singing old national war-songs.

At an early hour in the morning of the 14th of October, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and bastard brother of the Duke, being the son of his mother Arlette, by a burgher of Falaise, celebrated mass, and gave his benediction to the Norman army. He then put a hauberk under his cassock, mounted a powerful white charger, and led forth a brigade of cavalry ; for he was as ready with the spear as with the crosier, and for his fighting and other turbulent propensities, well merited his surname of Odo the Unruly.

The army was formed into three columns :—one composed of mercenaries from the countries of Boulogne and Ponthieu ; the second of auxiliaries from Brittany and elsewhere ; the third of Norman troops, led by William in person. Each column was preceded by archers in light quilted coats instead of armor, some with long bows, and others with cross-bows of steel. Their mode of fighting was to discharge a flight of arrows, and then retreat behind the heavy armed troops. The Duke was mounted on a Spanish steed, around his neck were suspended some of the reliques on which Harold had made oath, and the consecrated standard was borne at his side.

William harangued his soldiers, reminding them of the exploits of their ancestors, the massacre of the Northmen in England, and, in particular, the murder of their brethren the Danes. But he added another and a stronger excitement to their valor ;—‘ Fight manfully, and put all to the sword ; and if we conquer, we shall all be rich. What I gain, you gain ; what I

conquer, you conquer ; if I gain the land, it is yours.' We shall give, in our author's own words, the further particulars of this decisive battle, which placed a Norman sovereign on the English throne.

' The spot which Harold had selected for this ever-memorable contest was a high ground, then called Senlac, nine miles from Hastings, opening to the south, and covered in the rear by an extensive wood. He posted his troops on the declivity of the hill in one compact mass, covered with their shields, and wielding their enormous battle-axes. In the centre the royal standard, or gonfanon, was fixed in the ground, with the figure of an armed warrior, worked in thread of gold, and ornamented with precious stones. Here stood Harold, and his brothers Gurth and Leofwin, and around them the rest of the Saxon army, every man on foot.

' As the Normans approached the Saxon intrenchments, the monks and priests who accompanied their army retired to a neighboring hill to pray, and observe the issue of the battle. A Norman warrior, named Taillefer, spurred his horse in front of the line, and, tossing up in the air his sword, which he caught again in his hand, sang the national song of Charlemagne and Roland ;—the Normans joined in the chorus, and shouted, " Dieu aide ! Dieu aide !" They were answered by the Saxons, with the adverse cry of " Christ's rood ! the holy rood ! "

' The Norman archers let fly a shower of arrows into the Saxon ranks. Their infantry and cavalry advanced to the gates of the redoubts, which they vainly endeavored to force. The Saxons thundered upon their armor, and broke their lances with the heavy battle-axe, and the Normans retreated to the division commanded by William. The Duke then caused his archers again to advance, and to direct their arrows obliquely in the air, so that they might fall beyond and over the enemy's rampart. The Saxons were severely galled by the Norman missiles, and Harold himself was wounded in the eye. The attack of the infantry and men-at-arms again commenced with the cries of " Nôtre-Dame ! Dieu aide ! Dieu aide !" But the Normans were repulsed, and pursued by the Saxons to a deep ravine, where their horses plunged and threw the riders. The *mêlée* was here dreadful, and a sudden panic seized the invaders, who fled from the field, exclaiming that their duke was slain. William rushed before the fugitives, with his helmet in hand, menacing and even striking them with his lance, and shouting with a loud voice :—" I am still alive, and with the help of God I still shall conquer !" The men-at-arms once more returned to

attack the redoubts, but they were again repelled by the impregnable phalanx of the Saxons. The Duke now resorted to the stratagem of ordering a thousand horse to advance, and then suddenly retreat, in the hope of drawing the enemy from his intrenchments. The Saxons fell into the snare, and rushed out with their battle-axes slung about their necks, to pursue the flying foe. The Normans were joined by another body of their own army, and both turned upon the Saxons, who were assailed on every side with swords and lances, whilst their hands were employed in wieldng their enormous battle-axes. The invaders now rushed through the broken ranks of their opponents into the intrenchments, pulled down the royal standard, and erected in its place the papal banner. Harold was slain, with his brothers Gurth and Leofwin. The sun declined in the western horizon, and with his retiring beams sunk the glory of the Saxon name.

' The rest of the companions of Harold fled from the fatal field, where the Normans passed the night, exulting over their hard-earned victory. The next morning, William ranged his troops under arms, and every man who passed the sea was called by name, according to the muster-roll drawn up before their embarkation at St. Valery. Many were deaf to that call. The invading army consisted originally of nearly sixty thousand men, and of these one-fourth lay dead on the field. To the fortunate survivors was allotted the spoil of the vanquished Saxons, as the first fruits of their victory; and the bodies of the slain, after being stripped, were hastily buried by their trembling friends. According to one narrative, the body of Harold was begged by his mother as a boon from William, to whom she offered as a ransom its weight in gold. But the stern and pitiless conqueror ordered the corpse of the Saxon king to be buried on the beach, adding, with a sneer, "He guarded the coast while he lived, let him continue to guard it now he is dead." Another account represents that two monks of the monastery of Waltham, which had been founded by the son of Godwin, humbly approached the Norman, and offered him ten marks of gold for permission to bury their king and benefactor. They were unable to distinguish his body among the heaps of slain, and sent for Harold's mistress, Editha, surnamed "the Fair" and "the Swan's Neck," to assist them in the search. The features of the Saxon monarch were recognized by her whom he had loved, and his body was interred at Waltham, with regal honors, in the presence of several Norman earls and knights.'

We have reached the conclusion of Mr. Wheaton's interesting volume, yet we are tempted to add a few words more

from other sources. We would observe that there are not wanting historians who dispute the whole story of Harold having fallen on the field of battle. 'Years afterwards,' we are told by one of the most curiously learned of English scholars, 'when the Norman yoke pressed heavily upon the English, and the battle of Hastings had become a tale of sorrow, which old men narrated by the light of the embers, until warned to silence by the sullen tolling of the curfew,' there was an ancient anchorite, maimed, and scarred, and blind of an eye, who led a life of penitence and seclusion in a cell near the Abbey of St. John at Chester. This holy man was once visited by Henry I., who held a long and secret discourse with him, and on his death-bed he declared to the attendant monks that he was Harold.* According to this account, he had been secretly conveyed from the field of battle to a castle, and thence to this sanctuary; and the finding and burying of his corpse by the tender Editha, is supposed to have been a pious fraud. The monks of Waltham, however, stood up stoutly for the authenticity of their royal reliques. They showed a tomb, enclosing a mouldering skeleton, the bones of which still bore the marks of wounds received in battle, while the sepulchre bore the effigies of the monarch, and this brief but pathetic epitaph:—*Hic jacet Harold infelix.*'

For a long time after the eventful battle of the conquest, it is said that traces of blood might be seen upon the field, and, in particular, upon the hills to the south-west of Hastings, whenever a light rain moistened the soil. It is probable they were discolorations of the soil, where heaps of the slain had been buried. We have ourselves seen broad and dark patches on the hill side of Waterloo, where thousands of the dead lay mouldering in one common grave, and where, for several years after the battle, the rank green corn refused to ripen, though all the other part of the hill was covered with a golden harvest.

William the conqueror, in fulfilment of a vow, caused a monastic pile to be erected on the field, which, in commemoration of the event, was called the 'Abbey of Battle.' The architects complained that there were no springs of water on the site. 'Work on! work on!' replied he, jovially; 'if God but grant me life, there shall flow more good wine among the holy

* Palgrave, Hist. Eng., Cap. XV.

friars of this convent, than there does clear water in the best monastery of Christendom.'

The abbey was richly endowed, and invested with archiepiscopal jurisdiction. In its archives was deposited a roll, bearing the names of the followers of William, among whom he had shared the conquered land. The grand altar was placed on the very spot where the banner of the hapless Harold had been unfurled, and here prayers were perpetually to be offered up for the repose of all who had fallen in the contest. 'All this pomp and solemnity,' adds Mr. Palgrave, 'has passed away like a dream! The perpetual prayer has ceased forever; the roll of battle is rent; the escutcheons of the Norman lineages are trodden in the dust. A dark and reedy pool marks where the abbey once reared its stately towers, and nothing but the foundations of the choir remain for the gaze of the idle visiter, and the instruction of the moping antiquary.*'

ART. IV.—*Journal of the Landers.*

Journal of an Expedition to explore the Course and Termination of the Niger: with a Narrative of a Voyage down that River to its Termination. By RICHARD and JOHN LANDER. J. and J. Harper. New York. 1832.

We shall certainly be justified in pronouncing this work one of the most deeply interesting, in its kind, which has appeared in modern times. Independently of the very spirited running style of travellers, quite as good-humored and shrewd as they are energetic, and of the novelty attached to descriptions of new countries and people, and to a personal narrative of unusual vicissitude, it is sufficient to immortalize the Journal and its Authors alike, that it records the discovery of the long-sought termination of the Niger,—the river of Herodotus, 'full of crocodiles and flowing to the east,'—the Nile of Strabo,—the Arabian 'Nile of the Negroes,' pouring into the 'Sea of Darkness,'—the object of more inquiry and the occasion of more effort, perhaps, than any other locality on the face of the globe.

* Palgrave, Hist. Eng., Cap. XV.